

William III. and the Scots Presbyterians

PART II.

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THIS Paper is written to complete the study of the relationship between William III and the Scots Presbyterians. A previous Paper¹ dealt in detail with one central episode in the chain of events linking the King and the Scots Presbyterians—viz., the crisis that developed prior to the meeting of the General Assembly of 1694. The particular episode was examined and strong doubt cast on the popular, much repeated, story of the "midnight interview" between William and Carstares. The important part played in events in Scotland and at Whitehall by Mr. "Secretary" Johnston was studied over against the dominant role usually assigned to Carstares. In order, however, to complete the study consideration should be given to the whole period during which William and the Presbyterians were in association with each other—from the time of his coming to Britain till his death.

This will only have value if it entails not merely a recapitulation of events but a reconstruction of these events to suggest a re-appraisal of the happenings of that time which would differ from that rather superficial view so often accepted by those who portray the period.

The view that underlies this Paper and others² that have been presented to the Society on this period is a corrective to the facile reading of events of that time.

The usual picture given of the period is that, after the long fluctuating struggle between Presbyterians and Episcopalians during the reigns of the Stewarts there came, at the Revolution Settlement, overwhelming victory

¹ *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. XV., Part II. "William III and the Scots Presbyterians, Part I—The Crisis in Whitehall."

² *Records of the S.C.H.S.*, Vol. VIII—Part III. "The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence—A Post-Revolution Pamphlet." and Vol. XIII—Part I "Presbyterian and Episcopalian in 1688."

for the Presbyterians. Their ascendancy was complete and their principles were established under a benevolent and tolerant monarch, himself a Presbyterian, who understood them and had been associated with them from the time many Scots Presbyterians had been exiles in Holland. True there are awkward and puzzling incidents in the relationship like that fierce clash over the calling of the 1694 Assembly. But that is explained away as a minor misunderstanding due perhaps to the King's lack of knowledge of Scots affairs. When explained to him he gave way gracefully and thereafter King and Scots understood each other much better and the relationship was all harmony.

This picture is demonstrably false. The Presbyterians and the Episcopalians were fairly equally matched numerically at the Revolution. To begin with, the Episcopalians were in a very strong position and the Presbyterians in a position of considerable weakness. As events progressed the latter gradually won through to an increasingly stronger position. But the struggle was bitter and the issue for long by no means clear. Indeed, not till the Jacobite rebellion did the Presbyterian ascendancy become overwhelming. In playing their hand the Presbyterians had advantages and disadvantages, allies and enemies. One important factor was their relationship to King William.

It is that relationship that this Paper would seek to look at in its fascinating interplay. One other preliminary point must be made. William, contrary to what is often stated, took an intense personal part in dealing with the Scots Presbyterians. It is true that he did not visit Scotland and that he left much of the conduct of its affairs in the hands of the Scoto-Dutch junta of Bentinck, Carstares, etc. But he did play a direct part in the dealings with Scots Presbyterians and was deeply involved, not only through his advisers, but personally.

It will be a contention of this Paper that William and the Scots Presbyterians were thrown into an association which was at once an alliance and an enmity. They had to rely on each other to achieve the ends each sought but they did not trust one another. They were most uneasy associates. What was said of Adam Gib the leader of the Anti-Burghers and his Church at a later date, "They could not get on without each other but they could not get on with each other", perhaps characterises as nearly as anything the relationship between the two. In the dangerous situation in Scotland where the main hopes of the Stewarts lay to restore their fortunes and win back their throne, William could ultimately rely on the loyalty of the Presbyterians—and perhaps on that alone. The Episcopalians under their Bishops were avowedly committed to James. The nobility were, as usual, "trimming", with a foot in both

camps, ready to see how events developed. William was thrown back time after time on the Presbyterians. But as so often happens in such a situation he seems to have resented this dependence. He was determined to keep them in their place, to curb their pretensions and keep them from a position of dominance. This became, in the case of the situation of 1694, almost a point of personal pride with him. He needed to secure his position in Scotland but he resented the fact of this dependence.

The Presbyterians equally needed the King's help. They were fighting a desperate battle for supremacy. They were playing for the establishment and supremacy of Presbyterianism. To achieve this they had to use all their weapons. They had to compromise, temporarily they believed, with their highest principles of the "intrinsic right" of Presbytery. They had to take the low ground of the Claim of Right that "Presbytery was acceptable to the inclinations of the people". They had to depend on William to give them the Establishment, and they could not afford to alienate him too far or they would lose everything. Nevertheless they did not trust him for they knew his dealings with the Episcopalians and his suspicions of themselves.

So each needed the other but the association was a most uneasy alliance. Against this background thesis we might look at this man, William of Orange, with whom the Presbyterians had to deal.

WILLIAM III

The personality, ambition and achievements of William make an interesting psychological as well as historical study.¹ His ancestry, background and early life shaped him and set him on a course which he followed with undeviating tenacity.

His grandfather, Prince Frederick William of Orange, had an ambition to advance the House of Orange. He dreamt of establishing a monarchical system in Holland. In furtherance of this ambition he proposed to Charles and Henrietta Maria in 1640 that his son William should marry Princess Mary of England. This suggestion was accepted and the marriage took place in 1641 giving increased stature to the House of Orange. Nevertheless he was still an official not a sovereign. The Dutch Republic was a loose federation of seven sovereign provinces. In five of the seven provinces Frederick William had been appointed by the governing body—"the States" to be Stadholder—a kind of governor or executive officer. The

¹ Useful studies on the character and personality of William are those by G. I. Renier, *William of Orange*, 1932; and the recent study by Nesca A. Robb, *William of Orange—The Early Years*, Heineman, 1962.

federal organ—the States General—had appointed him Commander-in-Chief of the federal army and navy. These dynastic ambitions of the House of Orange, however, began to arouse opposition. The Province of Holland, the richest and mightiest of the confederation, was determined to maintain its prestige and power against the encroachments of the ambitious Stadholder. Henceforth there is a struggle for power in the Dutch Republic.

Frederick William's son, William II, was appointed Stadholder and Commander-in-Chief. He actually attempted a coup to seize supreme power. He attacked Amsterdam to defeat the Province of Holland. He died suddenly in 1650 and one week later, 14th November, 1650, his widow gave birth to a son—who was to be William III. The struggle for power was continued by the Orange house represented by the baby's mother, Mary (of England), his grandmother, Amalia, and William Frederick, head of another branch of the Nassau family.

But Amsterdam decided that the accumulation of military and civil dignities which had been achieved by previous leaders of the House of Orange should be stopped. For 21 years the young Prince was kept out of all the offices occupied by his ancestors. This is very important in its effect upon him. His childhood and youth were coloured by this frustration which left an indelible mark upon his character. G. J. Renier in his study *William of Orange* says—

“The magnitude of his eventual triumph was due to a reaction against this very oppression. It carried him into a position of power in the Dutch Republic, which, in turn was the *sine qua non* of his conquest of the English throne.”¹

In the early years of his life the odds seemed heavy against his ever attaining his ambitions. De Witt was the leader of the opposition to Orange and its dynastic pretensions. When Cromwell clashed with the Dutch a treaty was concluded and the Act of Seclusion passed which stated “that no Prince of Orange should ever occupy the position once held by his ancestors in the Republic”. Cromwell, no doubt, also wished to prevent the emergence of a strong leader of the Dutch.

It seemed then that everything was against the young Prince.

“By international agreement and by determination of enemies of his House the pale child of three in whom centred the hopes of Orange was sentenced to grow up as a private person with nothing but the vaguest of hopes that must have seemed incapable of realisation to all but the incorrigibly sanguine.”²

¹ G. J. Renier, *William of Orange*, (1932), p. 21.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

But this very Act, imposed by a foreign power, caused something of a reversal of opinion in the State of Holland regarding the Prince. It is impossible here to trace the story in all its detail but it is fascinating to see how the young William, as he grew up, set himself to achieve the ambitions of his House and his own ambition which had become the driving power of his whole life.

After the Restoration, in 1662, Charles II. visited Holland and was entertained at the Hague. With him through the Hague there rode his nephew William, brought out in deference to his uncle. Both parties in Holland began to realize that William must be treated as more than a private citizen. In 1666 the States of Holland decided he should be called "Child of the State" and educated by the States. By the Act of Harmony in 1670 De Witt was appointed guardian to William. But looking to the future provision was made to separate permanently the office of Stadholder and Commander-in-Chief.

The boy was determined never to rest until he came into what he held to be his own. His utter dedication to this task continued through his life and is an important key to his character and all his actions. He was already taciturn and the traits so characteristic of him, silence, obstinacy, ungraciousness, developed over against his guardian De Witt. That worthy man, who was genuinely concerned for freedom, sought not unkindly to educate the boy in the ideals of the Republic. But William was waiting his opportunity. When the shocking murder of De Witt and his brother occurred William received the news in his own inscrutable manner. There is no reason to believe that he had any hand in the atrocity but he made no attempt to punish the culprits. The resemblance is very like the Massacre of Glencoe later.

Meantime his fortunes improved. He was invited (now aged 20) to visit England and did so in some style escorted by 100 nobles. As a far-out possible claimant to the throne he was regarded in England with some interest. The States yielded. He was appointed Captain-General of the Forces (at first for one year). Before long he was appointed to all the honours and offices that had been held by his ancestors. Now began the great achievements of his life, the struggle against Louis XIV. and the power of France. In his leadership he did great things for his country and incidentally increased his own power and stature in the Republic. Now he turned his ambitions beyond his own land to Britain where he was not forgetful of his potential claim to the throne. This far-out possibility became infinitely more powerful by his marriage to Mary, daughter of James VII.—then Duke of York. Charles II. had suggested the marriage to win William's aid in his plans. But William had his own plans.

Now the way opens up for the events that led to the invitation to him to take the Crown of Britain. He had come a long way. He had secured his position and fulfilled the dreams of his House in reaching the position he occupied in Holland. But there were other worlds to conquer. Another throne might be his. He was in touch with English leaders and round him in Holland had gathered a large group of exiled Scots. After long and careful preparations he sailed and landed at Torbay in 1688. And so we see him, poised on the eve of his new venture in kingship. By sheer ruthless determination he had overcome the obstacles set against him and the House of Orange. The resolution born in him in the early days of his exclusion from the places of power had succeeded thus far. Against tremendous odds he got his way. The qualities that had brought him thus far would undoubtedly be employed in relation to his new adventure in kingship in England and in Scotland.

It is interesting to note that this man who had achieved all this was struggling all the time against physical disability. He was asthmatic, he had repeated bouts of coughing. He suffered from various complaints including swellings on his legs. During the last ten years of his life he was rarely out of the doctor's hands. With one shoulder higher than the other, and his livid complexion, he was not attractive. Always he had a deep melancholy, an exclusiveness and ungraciousness. He had been brought up a Presbyterian, but that meant nothing to him. He was a Calvinist and that did influence him greatly. He never doubted that he was predestined to kingship and leadership in the struggle between Protestant and Catholic Europe. But as has been said "Predestination for him did not mean fatalism. God helps them that help themselves."¹ He had to use all his abilities to secure what was his due. Nothing was to stand in his way.

It is a little strange that this man should have achieved a reputation for tolerance and benevolence. Anyone more intolerant of anybody or anything that stood in his way it is difficult to imagine. This was his touchstone. If his will was thwarted, or his interests threatened, he was implacable. His attitude at the murder of the De Witts was paralleled by his implication in the Massacre of Glencoe. If the Macdonalds or any other Highlanders were thinking of disloyalty there should be no mercy. He signed the order containing the words "As for McLan of Glencoe and that tribe, if they can be distinguished from other Highlanders, it will be proper for the vindication of public justice to extirpate that set of thieves."² That language is the measure of the man's temper. An enquiry instituted

¹ G. J. Renier, *William of Orange*, p. 78.

² *Source Book of Scottish History*, III, p. 222.

four years later by the Scots Parliament brought no punishment from William beyond the dismissal of Dalrymple. And the man who dared to instigate the enquiry, whose findings were critical of the Court—"Mr. Secretary" Johnston—was speedily dismissed from office.

Again, Neville Payne, for his suspected complicity in the Montgomerie Plot, was brutally tortured with boot and thumbikins to abstract from him what he knew of the plot. J. H. Burton in his *History*¹ says, "Payne was the last person ever tortured for political causes in Scotland. His case was as discreditable to that of William as that of Carstares was to the government of Charles. William signed the order for his torture."

Again it is somewhat ironical that tolerance should be attributed to the monarch whose name has become synonymous with religious bigotry in Ireland. The "King Billy" who "slew the Papist crew at the Battle of Boyne Water" and "was up to the knees in Irish blood" is perhaps unjustly credited with the bitter violence of these days, but he cannot emerge as a benevolent and kindly figure.

The simple fact is surely that to anybody or anything that stood in his way William was ruthless and implacable. Similarly in religious affairs. Again the guiding principle with William was whether or no religious scruples were likely to question his power and authority or thwart his purpose. If religious principles offended in neither of these two points—then people could be Presbyterian or Episcopalian. It was indifferentism rather than toleration with William.

This was exemplified in the case of his taking of the Oath, so often quoted as an example of his tolerance. The last clause of the Coronation Oath read to William and Mary on 11th May, 1689, by the Earl of Argyll asked the King to swear that "he shall root out all heretics and enemies to the true worship of God, that shall be convicted by the true Kirk of God of the foresaid crimes." At this point William paused and said "I will not lay myself under any obligation to be a persecutor." Cunningham commenting on this says that William had exonerated his conscience and exhibited his principles. "It was a good omen for the future that such sentiments had at length mounted the British throne."²

But was this tolerance? Was this not just one more move in the encounter between William and the Scots Presbyterians. They had had this phrase inserted in the Oath. Obviously it was directed against the Episcopalians. The phrase "the true Kirk of God" reveals its origin. William was to commit himself to root out the enemies of the "true Kirk".

¹ J. Hill Burton, *History*.

² Wm. Cunningham, *History of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. II, p. 163.

William was not so foolish as to commit himself like this. It was his policy to play off the Episcopalians and others against the Presbyterians and he checkmated this move. But all this has little to do with tolerance.

This discussion on William's "tolerance" has been something of a diversion. It is not to blacken his character but to question the attributing, to a man so single-minded and ruthless in his opposition to all that stood in his way, of this mild and comparatively modern virtue.

THE REVOLUTION: IN ENGLAND AND IN SCOTLAND

This was the man who landed at Torbay in 1688 and moved on London to achieve "The Glorious Revolution". He had to secure the throne of England and Scotland. The situation in the two countries was very different. This was brought forcibly to his notice by the way in which he was offered the crown in the two countries. In England the way was smoothed for him and for everybody with constitutional consciences by the method of his accession. As in the case 250 years later, it was made easier for everybody, including his successor, to proclaim that James VII. had, by his flight, abdicated, and to invite William as a legal claimant in succession to occupy the throne. This he did and was soon firmly ensconced.

The situation in Scotland was very different. When the offer of the Crown came to William from the Convention of Estates, it came in terms that declared bluntly that James had forfeited the Crown.

"The Estates of the Kingdom of Scotland find and declare that King James the Seventh invaded the fundamental constitution of the Kingdom and altered it from a legal limited monarchy to an arbitrary despotic Power whereby he both forefaulted the Right to the Crown and the throne is become vacant the said Estates do resolve that William and Mary, King and Queen of England, France and Ireland be and be declared King and Queen of Scotland (*The Claim of Right*)."

There is a significant difference here. No doubt William noted it as he began his relationship to that northern Kingdom. Kings could "forefault" the Crown of Scotland, the description of which was "a legal limited monarchy." He had to walk warily there. Also he knew and was never allowed to forget that Scotland was a divided kingdom and a possible source of danger from the displaced Stewarts, who were waiting their chance to return. To secure his kingdom in England and to safeguard himself from attack in the north, he had to hold Scotland. The nobles he could not trust, the Bishops were for King James, the Episcopalians

were determined to regain their position. The only body he could un-faillingly depend upon were the Presbyterians. He was strangely averse to recognizing this, but it was brought forcibly home to him time and again. Two instances may be noted.

Right at the beginning of his reign there occurred the Montgomerie Plot. This conspiracy originated with a band of disappointed politicians who called themselves "The Club" and who, having failed in the scramble for places after the Revolution, made contact with the Jacobites and began to plan for the restoration of King James. One of the leaders was Lord Ross who for reasons of conscience or failure of nerve, revealed the plot to Wm. Dunlop, the brother-in-law of Wm. Carstares. This was conveyed to King William, who it is said, ever after felt himself obliged to Dunlop. Carstares in a letter to Dunlop commending him for his service says :

"You have done good service to your country, and a good king who is very willing and desirous we should be happy. He is sensible that the Presbyterians of that Kingdom are his best friends, and will, I doubt not treat them as such. (May 14, 1690—*Graham Dunlop M.S.S.*).¹

The second instance is in 1692. Burnet records how James Johnston the Secretary of State was sent down to Edinburgh to report on the Scottish situation. He reported to Whitehall in his usual blunt way that a very dangerous state of affairs had arisen.

"In Scotland they were likely to fall into great disorder. The King had hoped to bring in the Episcopal party to his service by putting some of the leaders into chief posts ; but as by doing this, he had disgusted the Presbyterians, so it quickly appeared these men came only into employment on design to betray him and deliver up the Kingdom to King James."²

The bringing in of the Episcopalians had led to the resignation of Hamilton and other Presbyterian leaders. Those in authority, according to Johnston, were disaffected and ready to sell out to the Jacobites. "A very small force sent from France could have mastered the Kingdom."³ "The generality of the gentry and nobility became open in declaring for King James." Johnston proposed strong action. Parliament should be called in 1693 and Hamilton reinstated as Commissioner to win back the loyalty and allegiance of the Presbyterians. This was done and the situation retrieved through Johnston and the Presbyterians.

¹ Quoted by R. H. Story, *William Carstares*, p. 181.

² Foxcroft, *Supplement from unpublished M.S.S. to Burnet's History, etc.*,

³ *Ibid.*, p. 391. pp. 370, 391.

Nevertheless, though William recognised his dependence on the loyalty of the Presbyterians to hold Scotland steady to his interests, he was determined to curb their powers and aspirations. This is seen in two ways (1) in his repeated attempts to cultivate the Episcopalians and play them off against the Presbyterians and (2) in his attempt to control and regulate the General Assembly when it resumed its meetings. We might look at these in turn for both exemplify that peculiar relationship indicated at the beginning of this Paper—an uneasy alliance that at times bordered on open hostility ; with William involved, not through intermediaries, but very personally. No doubt he was fighting his European war at this period but this was a continuing issue between him and these men in Scotland—an issue that involved his own position, pride and prejudice.

When William landed in England in 1688 there were in his entourage a large number of exiled Scots politicians and Churchmen, who had rendered him service in Holland and who were confident of his patronage and support in the new set-up in Scotland. But as Story puts it "To William at Whitehall Scottish Presbyterianism did not appear so potent an element in the national life as to William at the Hague."¹ Contrary to popular belief, his own upbringing as a Presbyterian meant nothing to him. He was indifferent to the form of Church Government provided it did not interfere with his plans or dispute his authority. Indeed like his predecessor James VI. of Scotland, another Presbyterian who succeeded to the throne of Great Britain, he may have decided that government of the Church by bishops was more suited to kingly authority than that of these high-flown Presbyterians. If he could make a place for the Episcopalians in Scotland ; if he could win the bishops' loyalty, he might discard the Presbyterians ; or if that failed he could play off the two, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, against each other. There was also the other consideration—that favours to their Episcopalian brethren in Scotland, or at least the forbidding of any kind of persecution, would please the leaders of the Church in England.

Something of all this is surely required to explain the manoeuvres of William in these early days of his association with England and Scotland. That he, who was the hope of the Presbyterians, should immediately begin flirtation with their rivals, the Episcopalians, cannot otherwise be understood. It is often misunderstood or simply ignored. But it is undoubtedly true that that is what William did, to the consternation of the Presbyterians in Scotland and men like Wm. Carstares and James Johnston in England.

Proof of this liaison of William with the Episcopalians is available in

¹ Story, *William Carstares*, p. 167.

the records of the time. It is known that the two great leaders of the Jacobite cause in Scotland were Viscount Dundee (Claverhouse) and the Earl of Balcarres. The episode of the walk in the Mall when Dundee and Balcarres tried to persuade James to stay and avowed their loyalty to him is well-known. What is less well-known is that William also had interviews with these very two.¹ Dundee had served in Holland and Balcarres was his cousin. Both men, however, declined allegiance to William and stood by James. Besides these committed followers of James, William interviewed many of the nobles and gentry, for there was a great flocking to London by those desirous of favours under the new regime. Some of the noble families had a foot in each camp through father and son. William played a careful, non-committal role till he saw how the wind blew.

Also in London was Bishop Rose, despatched on 3rd December, 1688, by the Scottish bishops, to represent the interest of the Church still established in its Episcopal form. He had interviews with a number of English bishops notably with Compton, Bishop of London.²

Compton conveyed a message of the utmost frankness to Rose—

“My Lord, you see that the king having thrown himself upon the water must keep himself swimming with one hand. The Presbyterians have joined him closely and offered to support him, and therefore he cannot cast them off unless he could see how otherways he can be served.

The King bids me tell you that he now knows the state of Scotland much better than he did when he was in Holland: for while he was there he was made believe that Scotland generally all over was presbyterian, but now he sees that the great body of the nobility and gentry are for episcopacy, and 'tis the trading and inferior sort that are for presbytery; wherefore he bids me tell you, that if you will undertake to serve him to the purpose that he is served here in England, he will take you by the hand, support the church and order, and throw off the Presbyterians.”

Here indeed was an invitation. William would turn his back on the Presbyterians and support the Episcopalians, if they would promise loyalty to him.

Rose replied to this invitation by protesting his inability to speak for his brethren. “My Lord, I cannot but thank the prince for this frankness

¹ *An Account of the Affairs of Scotland, relating to the Revolution in 1688, etc., by the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Balcarres, 1714.*

² Keith, *Historical Catalogue*, pp. 65-71.

and offer, but withal I must tell you that when I came from Scotland neither my brethren or I apprehended any such revolution as I have now seen in England and therefore I neither was, or could be, instructed by them what answer to make to the prince's offer and therefore what I say is not in their name but only my private opinion, which is that I truly think they will not serve the prince so as he is served in England ; that is, to make him their king, or give their suffrage to his being king."

Bishop Compton is said to have approved his honesty—but added that he (Rose) had not waited on the King nor had any of the Scottish bishops sent an address to him. So, he added significantly "the king must be excused for standing by the Presbyterians."

The next day Rose had a brief interview with William at Whitehall. William came over to Rose and said, "Are you going for Scotland?" "Yes Sir," said Rose, "if you have any commands for me." William replied, "I hope you will be kind to me and follow the example of England." The bishop replied, "Sir, I will serve you as far as law, reason, or conscience shall allow me." On this virtual refusal, the King turned away without another word. So ended William's bid for the loyalty of the Scots bishops.

Several other attempts were made to intercede with William for the Episcopalians. News was beginning to come from Scotland of hardships to the clergy. Sir George Mackenzie suggested to Compton that the Scottish nobility and gentry then in London should wait upon the prince and intercede for the clergy, but the Bishop of London, after consulting William, brought a message that he could not allow friends of the hierarchy to resort to him in a body, lest the Presbyterians should take offence, and that for a similar reason he could not permit that party to come to him. Another attempt was made to enlist William's intervention on behalf of the clergy in Scotland now being dispossessed. Dr. Scott, Dean of Glasgow, himself ejected from his benefice in Hamilton, was the bearer of a petition to William from Archbishop Paterson and incumbents in his diocese, asking protection. William did issue a proclamation forbidding disturbances and violence but refused to move further. Dr. Fall, Principal of the Glasgow College, also brought a representation on the attack by the Cameronians on the congregation in the Cathedral on Christmas Day. William cautiously referred both Scott and Fall to the Convention soon to meet.

In all this William, as far as outward appearances went, was acting very carefully and judiciously and awaiting events. It is only the publishing of the private correspondence of Dr. Rose, the Bishop of Edinburgh,

to his friend Bishop Campbell years later (1713) recalling the events of 1688, that reveals what was going on in London¹ and what William, the so-called champion of Presbytery, was actually proposing to do by way of selling the Presbyterians down the river.

Rose in his letter to Campbell ruminates on whether the King would have kept his promise.

“Whether the Prince would have stood by his promise of casting off the Presbyterians and protecting us, in case we had come into his interests, I will not determine though this seems most probable with me and that for these reasons—he had the Presbyterians sure on his side, both from inclination and interest, many of them having come over with him and the rest of them having appeared so warmly, that with no good grace imaginable could they return to King James’s interest ; next, by gaining us he might presume to gain the Episcopal nobility and gentry, which he saw was a great party ; and consequently that King James would be deprived of his principal support ; then he saw what a hardship it would be upon the Church of England, and of what bad consequence, to see Episcopacy ruined in Scotland, who, no doubt, would have vigorously interposed for us, if we, by our carriage, could have been brought to justify their measures.”

(This correspondence is to be found in Keith, *Historical Catalogue*, pp. 65-71 in Papers of the Episcopal Church of Scotland).

THE CONVENTION OF ESTATES OF 1689

Meantime, while these manoeuvrings were going on in London, events were moving fast in Scotland. By a remarkable series of events the Scots Presbyterians moved from a very weak position to a much stronger one. James’ last act in sending the army south gave the opportunity to dissident forces. The presence of Western Cameronians in Edinburgh had an effect on events. The Estates met on 14th March, 1689, on a circular letter sent by William. There was a strong ecclesiastical representation at the beginning, two archbishops, the Bishop of Edinburgh and six other prelates. But after a protest they all withdrew, maintaining their allegiance to James, but leaving the field open to the Presbyterians. Dundee and Balcarres were in Edinburgh but instead of making a bid for King James there, Dundee proposed to hold a rival meeting at Stirling and left the Convention and Edinburgh. From that time the cause of James was

¹ Keith, *Historical Catalogue*, pp. 65-71.

hopeless.¹ On the 4th of April the Convention declared that James had forfeited the crown and on the 11th it was agreed to offer the Crown of Scotland to William and Mary. A Paper was drawn up for acceptance by the Sovereign. In it was a reference to Church government. It was declared—

“Prelacy and superiority of any office in the Church above presbyters is, and hath been, a great and unsupportable grievance and trouble to this nation and contrary to the inclination of the generality of the people ever since the Reformation, they having been reformed from Popery by Presbyters, and therefore ought to be abolished.”²

This clause was carried by a majority, significantly enough, as the rest of the Claim of Right was agreed to without a division. But the Presbyterians had got it into the Claim of Right. This was a step forward for them. William and Mary accepted the Scottish Crown but were not called upon meantime to bind themselves to the conditions contained in the Claim of Right. They took the Coronation Oath,³ with the reservations mentioned by William and subsequently withdrawn by him, “on the rooting out of enemies of the true Kirk of God.” (This has been discussed earlier in this Paper).

The Estates, after an adjournment of some weeks, sat again on 5th June, now as a Parliament recognized by the new Sovereign, (though the legality of its calling has been disputed often). Notwithstanding the clause in the Claim of Right, the bishops had still a legal right to take their seats if they had been prepared to acknowledge William and Mary. Had they done so one wonders what the course of events might have been. But they were resolved to maintain their allegiance to James, and very loyally they did. Bowing themselves out of the Parliament gave a great chance to the Presbyterians to advance their cause.

On 2nd July a draft Act was brought in by the Earl of Annandale for the abolition of Prelacy and of all superiority of any office in the Church above Presbyters, reserving to their majesties to settle the Presbyterian Government in the way most agreeable to the inclinations of the people and the word of God. The royal Commissioner requested a copy of the draft, presumably for perusal by the King. At this stage an attempt was made by the Episcopal Synod of Aberdeen, through the Earl of Kintore, to present an address, agreeing to pray for King William, expressing a desire for Union with all their Protestant brethren who differed from them

¹ *Source Book of Scottish History*, Vol. III (*Dickinson and Donaldson*), pp. 198-9.

² *Ibid.*, p. 205; *A.P.S.*, IX, 37.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-9; *Nat. MSS.*, Scot., III, No. cvii.

only on matters of Church Government and asking for a free General Assembly. The Presbyterians viewed this proposal with some apprehension. They wanted Parliament to establish Presbyterianism first before a General Assembly was held.

Meantime the drafting of the Act for abolition of Prelacy was proceeding. The original phraseology was modified. The word "Presbyterian" was excised from that part relating to the settlement of church government and it was also agreed that the settlement was to be in the way most agreeable to the inclinations of the people; nothing being said of the word of God. This revised Act¹ became law on 22nd July; to the great relief of the Presbyterians. They were gradually consolidating their position. Prelacy and all superiority of any office in the Church above Presbyters were abolished. That was a big step. It was declared that the King and Queen, with the consent of Parliament, would settle in the Scottish Kingdom that Church government which was most agreeable to the inclinations of the people.

This was not so satisfactory for the Presbyterians for it brought the King again into the proceedings. William had practically been forced in accepting the Crown, to accept with it the suggestion in the Claim of Right that prelacy should go. This had now become law, but Presbyterianism was not yet established in its place.

THE PARLIAMENT OF 1690

Now comes a long interim period. It seemed that William was delaying the consummation so devoutly wished by the Presbyterians, viz. the establishment of Presbyterianism. He was obviously still in contact with the Episcopal clergy who were being dispossessed of their benefices. He wanted to help them and to obtain their support; he wanted them to offset the Presbyterians lest the latter became too powerful and difficult to control. He would have liked some other way less favourable to Presbyterians. Letters in the *Leven and Melville Papers*² between the Presbyterians reveal their anxiety about events at this time. But, as always, in the last resort, he could not win the Bishops or rely on the allegiance of the Episcopal clergy. About this time came the revelation of the Montgomerie Plot (already referred to) and the information that that revelation had come through the Presbyterian, Dunlop. Carstares rammed home the moral that he had to depend on the Presbyterians and

¹ For text see *A.P.S.*, IX, 104.

² *Letters and State Papers, chiefly addressed to George, Earl of Melville, etc.* Edited by W. Leslie Melville, Bannatyne Club, 1843.

that therefore he must accede to the establishment of Presbyterianism. So William, with great reluctance, gave way and allowed an Act to be prepared for the Parliament when it reassembled.

But he was determined that the Presbyterians would not have it all their own way. It was to be a "moderate" Establishment and there was to be a "comprehension" for the Episcopalians. He called for a draft of the proposed Act and, with Carstares, went over it with him clause by clause. After which he dictated to Carstares the results of their consultation in a paper of "Remarks".¹ These were sent to Lord Melville, the King's Commissioner, to modify the Act. Sometimes it is suggested that these were Carstares' counsels to William but it seems more likely these are William's own personal modifications.

It is not possible to include the whole of this Paper of "Remarks" here. It can be studied in full in the *Leven and Melville Papers* p.436 or in McCormick's *State Papers* p.26. The letter to Melville states, "We have considered the act anent Church Government and have returned the same, with the alterations we have thought proper should be made upon it; however, we leave you some latitude, which we wish you would use with as much caution as you can, and in the way will be most for our service. Given etc. W.R."

He also gave Melville instructions that he was to watch proceedings very carefully. He repeated previous instructions given to the Convention of 1689. "If you find that that interest is strongest which is for restoring the government of the Church in the Presbyterian way, you shall endeavour to have it, with the provision that the rules of discipline may be adjusted and all occasion of complaint for rigour be taken away." (*Leven and Melville Papers*, p.2).

The Act² was passed. The Church was established on the basis of the *Confession of Faith* and of the Presbyterian policy as defined and secured by the Act of 1592. The government of the Church was vested in the survivors of the ejected ministers of 1661 and a meeting of the General Assembly was appointed.

Much could be written on this Act of Establishment. The omission of the Covenants is striking. The *Confession of Faith* is included but not the *Catechism* and the *Directory of Worship*, as they were not read. It was an Erastian procedure for the Church to submit to; including the appointing of the General Assembly. But the Presbyterians were not dissatisfied.

¹ For text of *Remarks* see *Leven and Melville Papers*, p. 436 or McCormick, *State Papers*, p. 46.

² *A.P.S.*, IX, 133-4.

The Act had been drawn up by one of themselves, Sir James Stewart. It had survived largely the critical pruning of the King and Carstares and it was now law. They had secured the Establishment. They were confident that when they met in General Assembly they could soon begin to promote the "intrinsic" right of Presbytery. They had never given up belief in this despite the scoffing of the Episcopalians and the reproaches of the Cameronians.

William was unhappy about two other resolutions of the Parliament. On 8th May the Committee of Articles was abolished.¹ The retention of the Committee in some form had been strongly advocated by William for this had always been a means for the Royal influencing of Parliament. This means of control had now gone; and the prelates had gone. Another enactment saw the abolishing of Patronage.² This annoyed William intensely. He was equivocal in his remarks on Patronage, but there seems little doubt that he wished it retained, once more to control the Presbyterians. Sir William Lockhart wrote "The King at the settlement of Presbytery seems only to stick at the patronages."³ Melville, urged on by the ministers, assumed the responsibility for sacrificing patronage. A compromise plan was evolved which took a middle course between purely popular election and simple patronage, the power of presentation being conferred on the Protestant heritors and the elders of the parishes. This was one of the points on which there were recriminations between the Scots Presbyterians and William Carstares, and it is interesting that later when Carstares was a minister in Scotland he wrote pamphlets against Patronage. There is no doubt that William was angry with Melville for this concession and Melville was soon removed from office.⁴

WILLIAM AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The scene of the encounter between William and the Scots Presbyterians shifts finally to the General Assembly. The Presbyterians had gained their establishment (albeit on the low level of "the inclinations of the people"). Now, however, they looked forward to asserting high principles of Presbytery in the General Assembly appointed to meet the same year. But once more William was determined to have his royal say in the meetings of the Assembly and to see that they were firmly controlled and kept in order.

¹ *A.P.S.*, IX, 113.

² *Ibid.*, 196-7.

³ *Leslie and Melville Papers*, p. 414.

⁴ Burnet, *History etc.*, Vol. IV, p. 110.

Dr. Stewart Mechie says—"Perhaps it was just because the new king had no bishops wherewith to control the Church that he was inclined to use his Commissioner to keep the Assembly in the path of his choosing." (*Office of Lord High Commissioner*, p.21). The struggle is one of increasing bitterness with the flashpoint the Assembly of 1694.

The Assembly of 1690 met on 14th October—the first time the Assembly had convened since Cromwell's dragoons had interrupted its debates in 1653. The King's Commissioner was Lord Carmichael. Carstares was there with letters of instruction from the King. He was in constant attendance upon the Assembly although he was not a member. The Moderator was Hugh Kennedy, a member of the old Protesting party. A full contemporary account of the Assembly is to be found in the writing *Historical Relation, etc.* Satirical accounts can be found in Dr. William Pitcairn's *Babell* or *The Assembly* and in the writings of William Meston and other Episcopalians.

Carmichael was obviously there to maintain the king's prerogative and rights and to keep a close watch on proceedings. He began by delivering the King's gracious letter. Wrote William—

"A calm and peaceable procedure will be no less pleasing to us than it becometh you. We never could be of the mind that violence was suited to the advancing of true religion nor do we intend that our authority shall ever be a tool to the irregular passions of any party. Moderation is what religion enjoins, neighbouring churches expect from you and we recommend to you." (*Acts of Assembly*, 1690).

The Commissioner made several interventions, moved motions and made suggestions which were "a stumbling to many", but nobody seems to have objected to his acting in this way as a member of Assembly. The Assembly was composed (as the Parliament had decreed) of the sixty ministers ejected in 1662 and some young zealous ministers and they proceeded to set up machinery to purge the Episcopal incumbents. This must have been distasteful to Carmichael who knew the King's mind. At the end of the Assembly there was played out the first clash of wills over the summoning of the next Assembly—what the date and by whose authority? "Some proposed June, some August, the Commissioner rose and declared, in the King's name, the Assembly dissolved and appointed the next Assembly to meet on November 1, 1691."¹

Actually there was no meeting of Assembly in 1691. A Royal proclamation was issued adjourning it till January, 1692. William was asserting his authority.

¹ Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, 201ff.

In January 1691 William had sailed for Holland to open the Congress at the Hague. Carstares was with him and on February 10 he wrote to his brother-in-law, William Dunlop, "Dr. Canaries and Mr. Leask are here doing what they can for their friends."¹ Here is evidence of renewed contact between representatives of the Scots Episcopalians and William. Dr. Canaries² was the ejected Episcopal minister of Selkirk. He and William Leask, another "outed" Episcopalian, had been appointed to convey to William an assurance of their loyalty and a complaint of the hardships they were enduring at the hands of Commissions set up by the 1690 Assembly.

William gave them a sympathetic reception and despatched first one letter and then another to Scotland commanding the Commissioners to be impartial in their dealing with the Episcopalians, recommending leniency, and asking that no Episcopal minister who was prepared to give allegiance to the Government and submit to Presbytery should be disturbed in his living.

Story writes in his usual way, "It was hard, no doubt, in William's private opinion, that in the midst of the Congress which was to rule the policy of half Europe and to devise the coalition against his life-long enemy France, he should be molested by the squabbles of Scots ecclesiastics."³ But he did encourage Canaries and Leask and he took pains to write a strong protest to the Presbyterians." (*L. & M. Papers*, p.595). This is the usual line taken, but one wonders if the matter bulked so little in the King's mind. This was a matter he had something to say on and he took pains at once to reprimand the Presbyterians and encourage the Episcopalians.

The Episcopalians were greatly encouraged by the King's favour; the Presbyterians were correspondingly disturbed and depressed. In the correspondence between Presbyterians preserved in the *Leven and Melville Papers* there are gloomy reflections and apprehensions. Crawford, writing to Melville says, "This concession is attributed by the Jacobite and Episcopal party to fear on the part of the Presbyterians—not to generosity, and only serves to inflame their insolence to a strange pitch. It has almost, if not quite, unhinged Church and State." (*L. & M. Papers*, 596, 601).

What was brewing now? William shewed what was in his mind by following up his letters of admonition to the Scots Presbyterians by producing a scheme of comprehension. Following on the protestation of loyalty by Canaries and Leask on behalf of their co-religionists he concluded

¹ *Carstares Papers*, quoted by Story, *William Carstares*, p. 211.

² For study of James Canaries, see A. Philip, *Evangel in Gowrie*, Edin., 1911.

³ R. H. Story, *William Carstares*, p. 212.

that many of the clergy would join the Establishment if no renunciation of Episcopacy were demanded. Provided they acknowledged his full title to the throne and signed the Westminster Confession of Faith, not necessarily as a confession of the faith of each individual, but as a bond of peace, they were to be admitted to the Church or allowed to keep their benefices. They would share in the government of the Church. A formula expressing loyalty had been devised.¹

On the King's wishes being known, many of the Episcopal clergy were inclined to accept the terms recommended. At a meeting of the clergy of the diocese of Aberdeen it was agreed to apply to the Assembly for admission as suggested. Two commissioners, Robert Irving, minister at Towie and John Forbes, minister at Kincardine, were appointed by the Aberdeen Synod and linked up with other brethren from the South making similar application.

It may be worth examining the reality beneath these applications. Were they genuine or were they partly manoeuvres against the Presbyterians with the King's backing? Did they really wish this "comprehension" in the terms proposed? It was, at least, a sign of the King's favour and a means of embarrassing their rivals, the Presbyterians.

They, in turn, regarded this proposal with disfavour and apprehension. If largely acted upon, it might have meant in some synods and presbyteries—perhaps even in the General Assembly—an Episcopal majority. As for William, he was, of course, indifferent to the form of Church government, provided all gave allegiance to him and the complaints ceased. Besides, it is suggested by some historians that the proposal had the approval of these English prelates whose advice on matters ecclesiastical William was accustomed to seek.²

Whatever the varying motives, the Presbyterians killed it dead in the 1692 Assembly. A very full account of this interesting Assembly is given in a contemporary writing *A Vindication of the Address made by the Episcopal Clergy to the General Assembly of the Presbyterians, anno MDCXCII, etc. Edin. 1704*. It is actually written by Robert Irving, one of the ministers concerned.³ It describes the happenings of the Assembly.

The Earl of Lothian was the King's Commissioner. He began by reading the King's letter which severely admonished the Presbyterians for not obeying his letters from abroad. The Episcopalians who were seeking admission, made contact with him and he supported them in their efforts.

¹ See Grub, *History*, Vol. III, p. 329; *Source Book of Scottish History*, III, 217.

² See Grub, *History*, Vol. III, p. 328.

³ A copy of this pamphlet is in the National Library of Scotland. *Pamphlets* 521/24.

But the Assembly did everything to discourage them. It was only after they had been kept waiting for a long time that they were allowed to present their Address prepared in terms of the King's instructions. Many objections were raised in the Assembly. Finally, despite Lothian's intervention, the petition was referred to a Committee and that was obviously to be the end of it.

Lothian, by this time, was furious and dissolved the Assembly without appointing another day of meeting. The Moderator, William Crichton,¹ while hastening to disclaim any attempt to disobey the King in all matters lawful, asserted on behalf of his brethren,

"I, in their name, they adhering to me, humbly crave leave to declare that the office-bearers in the House of God have a spiritual intrinsic power from Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Church, to meet in Assemblies about the affairs thereof, the necessity of the same being first represented to the magistrate: and farther I humbly crave that the dissolution of this Assembly, without indicting a new one to a certain day, may not be to the prejudice of our yearly general assemblies, granted us by the laws of the Kingdom."

The members then agreed to meet on the third Wednesday of August, 1693.²

Now matters were heading for a real crisis. When Lothian reported to William, the King was as furious as the Commissioner had been at the defiance of the Presbyterians. He obviously set himself to bring them to heel. The Parliament which met in 1693, instigated by the King, promulgated the Oath of Assurance³ acknowledging William as King *de iure* as well as *de facto*. This was to be sworn by all churchmen, Presbyterians and Episcopalians alike. Both objected. On an appeal by the Presbyterians the Privy Council pushed the matter infinitely further by decreeing that the Oath had to be taken by prospective members of the next Assembly before they could take their seats. The fat was now in the fire. This was plain Erastianism.

When would the Assembly meet? It has been appointed for the third Wednesday of August, 1693. Some ministers, it is said, did meet on that day but found the door of the Church in Edinburgh, where the Assembly had formerly met, closed against them.⁴ (*Records of S.C.H.S.* VI, 268).

¹ For account of Crichton see J. Warrick, *The Moderators of the Church of Scotland, 1690-1740*, pp. 47-57; also *Marchmont Papers*, III, 46.

² See Pamphlet: *Vindication of the Address made by the Episcopal Clergy etc.*

³ Text—*A.P.S.*, IX, 264.

⁴ *Records of S.C.H.S.*, Vol. VI, Part III—"The Lord High Commissioner," p. 268.

The Privy Council, on instructions of the King who was abroad, appointed a meeting to take place on 16th December following. This was followed by another royal proclamation changing the date to 29th March, 1694. The date was now set but the conditions on which it was to be allowed to meet were intolerable to the Presbyterians. A head-on clash was imminent.¹

This was the sensational conflict of wills between William and the Scots Presbyterians. All else had been leading up to this. In the event, the King yielded though it must have been a bitter pill for him to swallow. The usual devices have been employed to save the King's face and to turn this defeat into a magnanimous, kingly gesture. It is better that the record should be set right.

This was the fiercest clash between the King and the Scots Presbyterians. When the Assembly of 1694 did finally meet on the date appointed, the Presbyterians celebrated their victory with some magnanimity, in that they appointed Commissions to receive the Episcopal ministers who qualified themselves according to the recent Act of Parliament.² It would be a fitting climax to say that this was the end of the strife between the King and the Presbyterians. Cunningham, in his *History* has indeed a rhapsodical passage in which he says, "From that day to this there has been no collision between the Church and the Sovereign in regard to the calling of Assemblies."³ But the same Cunningham contradicts himself a few pages later on when he reveals further trouble in the year 1695.⁴ In that year William in a series of royal proclamations changed the date of the opening of the Assembly from April to July, then to November and finally to December. A considerable number of ministers had arrived on the date specified in July and were informed that they were not to be allowed to meet. This was Erastianism again and showed that William was still determined to control the Assembly.

Lord Carmichael began his address with the truculent words, "You are now met in the Assembly conform to the King's appointment." It was in this Assembly that James Hog of Dalserf clashed with the Commissioner. He refused to take The Oath of Allegiance to William and Mary, holding that even the reigning sovereign had no right to exact an

¹ *S.C.H.S. Records*, Vol. XV, Part II—"William III and Scots Presbyterians," Part I, for full discussion of this Assembly, the intervention of Johnston and the backing down of William.

² *A.P.S.*, IX, 449-50.

³ Cunningham, *Church History of Scotland*, Vol. II, p. 193.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 201. See also W. McMillan, "Lord High Commissioner," *Records of S.C.H.S.*, Vol. VI, Part III, p. 269.

oath from a minister as a condition of his being allowed to hold office in the Church of Christ. He was chosen as a Commissioner to the Assembly of 1695. Lord Carmichael knew Hog and objected to his taking his seat till he had qualified by taking the usual oath. The whole story is told by Hog in his *Memoirs* pp. 129-142. It represents another conflict between the King's authority and the right of Assembly, although in this case, Hog was taking a narrower view than even the earlier Covenanting Presbyterians. It is symptomatic perhaps of the tension still prevailing in the relations between King and Assembly.

This was exacerbated by the ridicule poured on the Church by the Cameronians for submitting to Erastian control by the King. This touched the Presbyterians of the Establishment on a tender spot. They had gained the Establishment in the face of difficulties by accepting the low ground of the "inclinations of the people" but they had never given up their resolve to proclaim, whenever strong enough, "the intrinsic" right of Presbytery. All things coming together, they decided in the year 1698, at the Commission of Assembly, to publish *A Seasonable Admonition*, in which they stated—

"We do believe and own that Jesus Christ is the only Head and King of His Church and that He hath instituted in His Church officers and ordinances, order and government, and not left it to the will of man, magistrate or Church to alter at their pleasure and we believe that this government is neither Prelatical nor Congregational, but Presbyterian, which now, through the mercy of God, is established among us: and we believe we have a better foundation for this our Church government than the inclinations of the people or the laws of men."¹

Perhaps on this high note we may leave the Scots Presbyterians. They were still in the throes of their struggle with William (though from 1694 the Assembly has never failed to meet each year). There was a very difficult period ahead of them in Queen Anne's reign when everything that they had gained seemed for a time to be imperilled. But meantime that phase of their continuing endeavours for Presbytery which was embodied in the relations between themselves and King William was moving to a close. In the midst of the Assembly of 1702 the news was received that William had died. The Assembly adjourned as a mark of respect for one who had been at once ally and adversary.

¹ Cunningham, *Church History of Scotland*, II, pp. 201-2.

